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Improvement in the Live of Poor People in Rural Areas through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme

Mr Narender Kumar[1], Dr Gian Chand[2]

[1]PhD Scholar, Department of Social Work, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra
Haryana- 136119
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, BPS Mahila Vishwavidyalaya Khanpur Kalan,
Sonepat- Haryana, India-131305

ABSTRACT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose volunteers do unskilled manual work. The programme also fosters gender equality, ensures equal wages, and drives socio-economic improvement, particularly among marginalized and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, MGNREGA is vital for providing employment to unskilled workers, including those with physical disabilities. The main objectives of the study are to examine the socio-economic impact of this Programme on Rural Poor People in Haryana and to explore the participation of rural people as beneficiaries and challenges of the Programme in Haryana. The secondary data is used for this descriptive research study, from various books, research papers and studies, conducted in the nearby villages of Sonepat District. The findings reveal that MGNREGA has significantly contributed to reducing rural-to-urban migration, promoting gender equality, ensuring equal wages, and improving the life of marginalized communities, including the physically handicapped. The programme has played a crucial role in rural India. This paper highlights the need for increased awareness about the programme, particularly through media campaigns, along with improved monitoring and evaluation by main stakeholders to ensure its effectiveness. It is suggested that; there should be proper provision for awareness; about programmes and schemes among masses through media; and proper monitoring & evaluation should be done by the main stakeholders.

Keywords: MGNERGA, Households, Right to Work, Job card, Poverty, Women Empowerment, Daily Wages, BPL Family.

INTRODUCTION

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 having received the assent of the; president on 5th Sept. 2005 was published in gazette of India on 7th Sept. 2005 . The act guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year; to a rural household whose adult persons are willing; to do unskilled manual work. But in Haryana MGNREGA is not working effectively. Stakeholders are not taking initiatives to provide work to the people. And this legislative measure not only targets the immediate need for income in rural areas; but also promotes sustainable rural development by creating durable assets and strengthening the infrastructure base of villages. The implementation of MGNREGS; reflects a rights-based approach to employment, ensuring transparency, accountability, and social inclusion. In Haryana; this scheme is launched in 2007, following the operational framework; laid out in the national guidelines. Initially launched in selected districts like Mahendergarh and Sirsa in 2006, the scheme implemented in all state up-to April 2008.

With a strong emphasis; on equity and empowerment, the scheme prioritizes marginalized groups, women, and families below the poverty line. Employment is provided close to the workers' residence, and if not, compensation; as additional wages is ensured. There are the provisions for unemployment allowance. Financially, the cost-sharing pattern of MGNREGS between the Central and the Governments of the State (90:10) underscores its status; as a central sponsor scheme with strong decentralized execution through Panchayati Raj Institutions. These local bodies play a central role in planning, implementing, and monitoring the works undertaken, ranging from irrigation to rural connectivity and sanitation. This research paper aims to analyze the design, implementation, impact, and challenges of MGNREGS with a special focus

on its operation in Haryana. Through a detailed examination of its objectives, permissible works, beneficiary targeting, wage structure, and governance mechanisms, the study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme in enhancing rural livelihood; security and promoting inclusive development. It has been the subject of numerous studies evaluating its impact on rural employment, economic development, and social inclusion. Research indicates that MGNREGS has contributed significantly to rural employment generation and poverty alleviation. In Haryana, the scheme has been instrumental for the marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. The main benefits or provisions of this Programme are Employment within fifteen days of application, unemployment allowance, provide work within 05 kilometer, the minimum wages, payment within fifteen days, no gender discrimination and basic worksite facilities etc.

Work/Activities under MGNREGA The MGNREGA stipulates that; works activities are, such as; water conservation and harvesting, afforestation, and rural connectivity. It also includes crucial tasks like flood control and protection. Other activities include digging new tanks and ponds, undertaking tree plantation drives, and land levelling to improve agricultural productivity. Each proposed activity; begins with a structured process in which a proposal is submitted and assessed to determine whether the work qualifies for sanction. Tree plantation as well as land levelling.

Prominent Provisions under MGNREGA

- Adult members of a rural household; willing to do unskilled manual work; are required to make registration in writing; or orally to the local panchayats.
- The Gram Panchayat after due verification will issue a job card. This job card will bear the photograph of all adult members of the household willing to work under MGNREGA and is free of cost.
- The job card should be issued within fifteen days of application.
- Job card holders can submit a written request for employment to the Gram Panchayat.
- Employment must be provided within 15 days of application.
- If not provided, the applicant is entitled to a daily unemployment allowance, which is the responsibility of the state government.
- Work should ideally be within a 5 km; radius of the applicant's village.
- If beyond 5 km, 10% additional wages must be paid for transportation and living expenses.
- Basic facilities such as crèches for childcare, drinking water, and shade must be provided at the worksite.
- Water ponds, tree plantation, land leveling, each work activity required.
- Work site facilities, such as; crèches, drinking water should be provided.
- Social audit has to be done by the gram sabha.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Mishra Anil, K and Singh M, (2018)** conducted a study on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and Employment Generation In India. The paper examined the impact of MANREGA on job creation in rural India. Using secondary data, their study concluded that the programme significantly contributed to employment generation while also enhancing food security and promoting overall rural development. The findings revealed that MANREGA play a significant role in employment generation. It not only provided a security of food, but also promotes rural development of the country.
- **Chahal, M. & Kumar, M. (2021)** highlighted the impact of MGNREGS on Employment Generation in Haryana. The study examined the importance of this scheme for the generation of employment in Haryana state. Focused on the effectiveness of MGNREGA in Haryana. By analyzing data from 2016–17 to 2020–21, they found that the scheme is helpful in generating rural employment and supporting development. It is concluded that the programme don't only provides security for livelihood but also supports rural development.
- **Debnath, Kallol., and Bankim, R, (2019)** conducted a study to know The Politico-Economic impact of MGNREGS. The findings revealed high levels of awareness (96%) about the scheme, although detailed knowledge of its provisions; such as the application process and grievance redressal mechanisms; was limited. The study highlighted the ecological benefits of MGNREGA, particularly through water conservation efforts in areas like the Sidhi block, and recognized the act's role in promoting both food security and long-term sustainable development. It is found that overall 96% of people knew about this act. It is found that respondents knew about the minimum wage and working days that can be availed under the act. But very few about the application for work grievance redress mechanism etc. The MGNREGA can actually be seen moving toward its short term and long term objective of food and livelihood security and long term sustainable development through ecological regeneration.

- **Dheeraj, R.P. (2017)** studied in his research article; A critical analysis of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural-Employment Guarantee Act; (MGNREGA)-2005. This research study analyzed the MGNREGA scheme. The study emphasized that while the scheme has made substantial contributions, it alone cannot ensure the holistic development of rural households. Author suggested the integration of additional policy measures, which are essential to maximize its developmental impact. He suggested to introduce new policies and initiatives with the current Programme which will betterment poor households in villages.
- **Jaswal, A., and Mistry, P. (2021**) conducted a study in Ahmedabad with the main objective of the study were to examine the financial & economic aspect of the MGNREGA, to know the effectiveness in implementation; of the programme. The main findings of the study are that MGNREGA has a great impact on the people. They found that while the programme had a noticeable positive impact on the economic conditions of beneficiaries, challenges such as delayed wage payments, insufficient information dissemination, and issues like single job cards for large families hindered its effective implementation. In the Programme; there was a lack of proper information; provided about the programme; and single job cards were given to the big size of the families.
- **National Federation of Women, (2019)** conducted a study on the impact of MGNREGA in Jhabua District, Madhya Pradesh. It is found that in Jhabua district a large number of scheduled tribes population are getting opportunities to do work under MGNREGA, as it is an alternative way of defining better livelihood. It has largely and positively affected the life of women in this District and found that; this Programme redefined; the rural Indian women's identity; in various ways. It significantly improved the life of rural women by increasing their involvement in decision-making and financial independence. It also led to a reduction in family migration and improved local infrastructure through water conservation projects. However, the study also highlighted the need for increased workdays and better awareness among women workers. There is need to increase the number of days, spending saving; and participation in community association thereby; ensuring their place in the local public sphere.

Relevance of the Study

It is an attempt to evaluate, the programme of MGNREGA as a corruption less wage employment programme and to analyze the impact; of MGNREGA on the; empowerment of rural women. The present study; holds significant relevance as it aims to critically evaluate MGNREGA as a corruption free programme and examine its impact on the empowerment of rural women. Despite of the several; wage employment initiatives in India over the years, the persistent issue of rural unemployment and poverty highlights their limited effectiveness. In contrast, MGNREGA stands out due to its rights-based approach, legal guarantee of employment, and focus on transparency. This study is crucial in understanding the challenges; and potential of MGNREGA across diverse regions. Moreover, it holds particular relevance for the field of social work, providing practical insights for fieldwork practice and serving as a valuable resource for students and professionals pursuing careers in rural development and social welfare. This programme is running successfully in many states; but there are some states like Haryana, Assam, Punjab etc. In which it is not implemented effectively. It is relevant for the field work practice in social work and as assistance for the students pursuing social work.

Research Design

Author has applied descriptive research design to the current research work to examine the Impact of MGNREGS on Rural Poor People; in Haryana, which is based on the secondary data, which is taken from various books, journals, website, Reports of the Departments and Ministries. In addition to it, the data is also taken from; the nearby adopted village of BPSMV, in which research studies are conducted.

Objectives

- To examine the socio-economic impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGA); on Rural Poor People in Haryana
- To explore the participation of rural people as beneficiaries; under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGA) in Haryana
- To examine the challenges; in proper implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme.

On the basis of the objectives of the study, as discussed above, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, is to provide 100 days of employment in one financial year to all the rural households whose adult members register themselves and volunteer to engage in unskilled manual work. Only 41.00 % of respondents; aware of the programme, with a majority of 59. % having no knowledge about it. Furthermore, while the Act promises 100 days of work, 64.00 % of respondents reported receiving less than that. 36.00 % respondents told to have 100 days of employment and 64 % are getting less than 100 days. Awareness about the objectives of the programme remains low, with only 20.00

% recognizing its core purpose and 65.00 % having no understanding of its goals. Despite this, 95.00 % confirmed that work was provided within the stipulated 5 km radius from their village, reflecting partial adherence to implementation norms.

A gender-inclusive aspect was noted, with 72.00 % of respondents identifying both men and women as beneficiaries, although 28.00 % were still unaware of this fact. The awareness about job cards, a critical component for availing benefits, was relatively higher at 79.00 %, though 21.00 % remained uninformed. Socio-economic data revealed that 47.00 % of respondents belonged to BPL families, and 29 % were from Scheduled Castes, indicating a fair reach among marginalized sections. However, knowledge about important entitlements such as equal wages (58 %) and worksite facilities (only 23.00 %) was still limited. Satisfaction levels with wages and working days were also mixed; 46.00 % expressed contentment, while 54.00 % felt that improvements in daily wages, number of workdays, and variety of work types were necessary.

Additional findings indicate a lack of widespread awareness about critical provisions like unemployment allowance (80.00 % unaware) and inadequate knowledge among even local leaders like Sarpanches. Furthermore, media and social platforms were found ineffective in disseminating information. A noteworthy insight is that many potential beneficiaries are reluctant to participate due to better-paying alternatives with timely payments, raising concerns about MGNREGA's competitiveness and perceived value.

Overall, while MGNREGA has made strides in employment provision and inclusion, the data highlights the urgent need for improved awareness, better implementation practices, enhanced wage structures, and targeted outreach, particularly in underperforming regions like Haryana. As per the facts, collected in various research studies, there were also Some more suggestions, given for improvement in the programme such as; the work should be given regularly. The work should also be for the semi-skilled and skilled poor people of the villages. Some other suggestions were given that the worksite facilities, maternity benefits for female regular workers of MGNREGA should be given. 80.00 % People don't know about the process for registration and unemployment allowance. More than half of the people were not have any information about their job cards. It was the alarming fact that even Sarpanches were also not having proper knowledge regarding this flagship programme of the Government. Studies reflect that mass media and social media is also not propagating it effectively. One of the significant findings was that a great number of people are also not ready to work under this important Programme because they told that they are getting much better wages at other places and even within better timing of payments.

Ways Forward

As this Programme is one the major programmes, which can mitigate the poverty in villages and it is also serving other objectives, such as; gender equality, equality of wages, easily and accessible wage places etc. To further enhance the effectiveness and reach of this programme, several recommendations can be put forth. First, the government should focus on expanding access to MGNREGS and other related programmes, as stated in the constitution, to ensure that rural populations benefit maximally. Increasing awareness among the masses is critical, and this can be achieved through a combination of media outlets, including newspapers, television, print media, street plays, and slogans. Additionally, it is essential for proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; effectively. At the grassroots level, organizing meetings involving sarpanches, panchayat, and beneficiaries will help address concerns, clarify doubts, and educate communities about available government schemes. Furthermore, training programs and workshops should be conducted for panchayat members to enhance their skills and knowledge about government schemes, ensuring that they can better assist their communities. Community-based organizations (CBOs) can also play a pivotal role in spreading awareness and facilitating the smooth implementation of MGNREGA, helping bridge the gap between the government and rural households. The community based organization should be active awareness and implementation about the scheme.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme is a very significant programme, which brings progress in employment for unskilled people in the villages. It is also important in the improvement of the financial condition of the village economy. The programme also fosters gender equality, ensures equal wages, and drives socio-economic improvement, particularly among marginalized and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, MGNREGA is vital for providing employment to unskilled workers, including those with physical disabilities. However, research findings indicate that a significant portion of the rural population remains unaware of the scheme, and lack proper access to the benefits. There is a need to increase wage rates, ensure proper facilities at the worksite, and strengthen the role of Gram Panchayats in implementing the programme. Additionally, collaboration between Gram Panchayats, district administrations, and other key stakeholders is necessary for the effective execution of MGNREGA. With improved

awareness, better implementation, and enhanced resources, it contributes to whole rural communities and development of India. Media can play; an important role in informing people about this employment scheme so there should be more publicity and use of mass-media and social media sources to increase awareness about this programme.

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